Bible Heroes FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

W.B. CONKEY CO.
CHICAGO

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BIBLE HEROES

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

FAVORITE STORIES FOR LIFE'S GUIDANCE

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THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

THE FLOOD.

The world had grown very wicked indeed since the time of Adam and Eve, and the people were getting worse and worse instead of better, so God saw that He must destroy them, or all would in time become bad.

There was one good man, however, named Noah, and God wished to spare him. So He told Noah that He would bring a great flood upon the earth and drown all the wicked people; but that Noah must build an ark in which he and his family ıould escape. This ark was to be a large, house-like boat, or ship, ıd God told His faithful servant just how to make it.

At last all was ready, and God told Noah to take into the ark easts and fowls of the air and creeping things of every kind, each ıe with its mate; also enough food to last for a long time, because e flood would continue forty days and forty nights without ceas-g, and the earth would be covered with water.

Noah did in everything as God had commanded, and when he mself and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and all the eatures which were to be taken into the ark, were safely inside, e flood commenced.

At the end of the forty days the rain ceased, and Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven to see if the earth had appeared above the waters. The raven did not come back, so Noah was sure that it had found some place to light upon and something to eat.

He sent forth a dove, also, which returned to the ark. Then he waited a number of days, and ent forth the dove again; this time it returned with an olive leaf in ts mouth. After a few more days he sent the dove out again, and his time it did not return; so Noah knew that the waters were going down.

Later, Noah removed the covering from the ark, and looking out, found that the earth was dry. So he went out of the ark with all his family and the creatures that were with him, and he built an altar and worshipped God.

And the Lord was pleased with Noah and blessed him and is sons, and promised that He would never again bring a flood upon the earth to destroy all the people as He had done before; and n token of this promise He placed he rainbow in the sky after the ain. So now when we see that eautiful arch, we can feel sure of God's loving care and protection.

LEAVING THE ARK.

THE FLIGHT FROM SODOM

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

The sons of Noah were named Shem, Ham and Japheth. These sons in turn became the fathers of children so that the descendants of Noah were very numerous.

One of these descendants, named Nimrod, was a mighty hunter and a man of power and authority in the land, and it has even been said that the people worshiped him as a god.

In those days men liked to build high towers reaching away up toward the heavens. Perhaps they were afraid of another flood, and perhaps they simply wished to show what they could do; but however that may be, ruins of towers can still be seen in various parts of the world, one of the most noted of which is that of the "Tower of Nimrod." It is forty feet high and stands on the top of a hill near the River Euphrates in Asia.

In the time of Nimrod, the people said, "Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto Heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." So they began to build the tower, and they made it very strong indeed, and kept raising it higher and higher toward the heavens, thinking, Jewish tradition, or story, tells us, that they would have a shelter in which they would be perfectly safe from any flood which might come, or any fire. There were some of the people also who wished to use the tower as a temple for the idols

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

which they worshiped. Six hundred thousand men worked upon this wonderful tower, so the story goes on to say, and they kept up the work until the tower rose to a height of seventy miles, so that, toward the last, it took a year to get materials for the work up to the top where the laborers were employed. Of course this story is exaggerated, but without doubt the tower rose to a great height and was a wonderful piece of work.

God was not pleased with what the people were doing, however, because they thought themselves so great and powerful that they had no need of Him, and so He put an end to their bold plans.

Up to this time all the people of the world had spoken the same language; but now, when they were working upon this wonderful tower, they commenced to talk in different tongues so that they could not understand each other, and there was great confusion. Owing to this, they were obliged to give up the building of the tower, and they separated themselves into groups, or divisions, each division speaking the same language, and then they spread out over the world, forming the various nations.

The tower was called the Tower of Babel because of the babel, or confusion, of tongues which had taken place there, and it was left unfinished to be a monument of God's power and man's weakness without Him.

These men were skillful in building, else they

never could have gone as far as they did in their stupendous work, and God was willing that they should exercise their skill, as He is willing that people shall do now; but when they thought themselves equal to Him, they learned how weak they really were in comparison. The story teaches the great lesson of dependence upon God and submission to His will and His laws.

ISAAC.

Abraham, the father of Isaac, was called "The Friend of God," because he loved the Lord so truly, and obeyed Him in all things without questioning. Abraham, with his family, lived in the land of Canaan, but he had not always lived there. He had come from a country where they worshipped idols, and often he had seen human beings offered up to these idols as sacrifices.

As has been said, he loved God very truly and had perfect faith in Him; but a great trial of his faith was coming. God told him to take his son—his only son, Isaac, whom he loved better than his own life—and to go away to a distant mountain and there offer him up as a burnt offering.

Of course Abraham was almost heart-broken when he received this command, but he never thought of disobeying it. So he took Isaac and two of his young men and journeyed toward the place which God had pointed out to him.

When they came in sight of the place, Abraham bade the two young men remain behind, while he went forward with Isaac to worship. Abraham gathered the wood for the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac's shoulders, and with his knife in one hand and a little vessel containing fire in the other, he went forward with his son.

As they went along, Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb
a burnt offering."

When they came to the place where the sacrifice was to be
red, Abraham built an altar there; then he placed the wood
n it, bound Isaac, who made no resistance, and laid him upon
altar, and was about to kill his son, when an angel appeared to
, and, calling him by name, forbade him to go on, saying that
d had told him to sacrifice Isaac only to test his faith.

Then Abraham saw a ram caught by the horns in a thicket
, and he took the ram and offered it up instead of his son, and
rejoiced together and gave thanks.

When Isaac was older, Abraham was anxious that he should
a wife from among his own people, so he sent his chief servant
to the land from which he had come to find a wife for Isaac.

The servant started with his camels and attendants, and also w rich presents to be given to the woman who should be chosen a to her family, and he prayed that God would guide him.

The Lord heard his prayer. He met the beautiful Rebekah a well where she had come to draw water, and when he asked her to give him a drink, she at once did as he requested, and also offered to draw water for his camels. This was the sign by which the faithful servant was to know the maiden whom he was to choose for his master's wife, and when the marriage was arranged with her family, Rebekah went to the land of Canaan and became the wife of Isaac, who loved her very tenderly.

MOSES BREAKING THE TABLES OF THE LAW

THE ISRAELITES CROSSING THE RED SEA.

JACOB AND ESAU.

Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau was the dearer to his father; but Rebekah loved Jacob more, and she wished her favorite son to have the birthright, or larger portion of the property, which really belonged to Esau because he was a little the older.

One day Esau came in from hunting, very tired and hungry, and sold his birthright to Jacob for a kind of stew called pottage.

Afterward, when Isaac had grown very old, he sent Esau one day to get some of his favorite meat, saying that when he returned he should have his father's blessing.

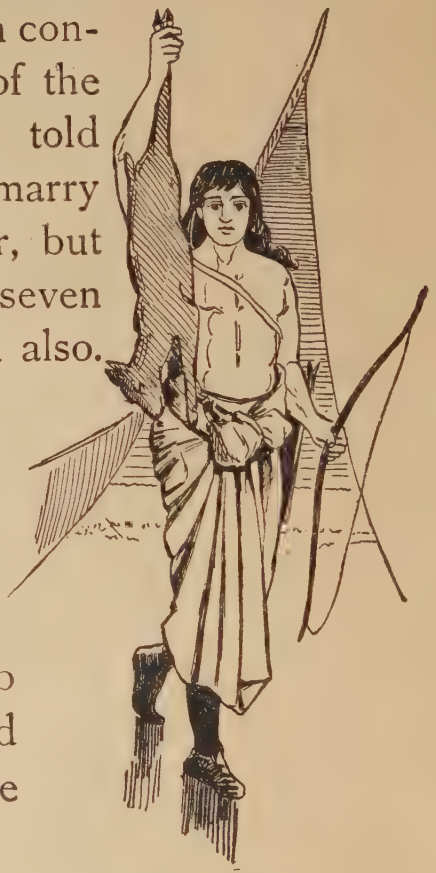
But Rebekah heard this and determined that Jacob should have the blessing instead. So she prepared meat, then dressed Jacob in some of his brother's clothing, covering his hands and neck with the skin of the kids, and sent him to his father;

ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

and Isaac blessed him, for his sight was dim, and he thought it was Esau.

When the elder brother returned, he was very angry with Jacob, and Isaac was deeply grieved to think he had been deceived; but he blessed Esau as well, who became prosperous and had large possessions and great power.

After this Jacob went to his mother's people, where he met Rachel, whom he loved very dearly. He told Laban, her father, that he would serve him faithfully seven years if Rachel might be his wife, and Laban consented to this; at the end of the seven years, however, he told Jacob that he must first marry Leah, as she was the older, but if he would serve another seven years he might have Rachel also. So Jacob served another seven years for Rachel, and then they were married.



Later Esau and Jacob met and were very glad to see each other, for Jacob had repented of his sin, and God had forgiven him; while Esau forgave him also.

REBECCA AT THE WELL.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

The story of Hagar and Ishmael is one of the strongest in the Old Testament, for it shows the power of a mother's love and what a true mother can endure for her child; while it also teaches that God can care for His faithful people under all circumstances, and that He is able to change a seeming misfortune into a very great blessing.

Ishmael was the son of Hagar and Abraham. When he was still a little boy, God commanded Abraham to send him away with his mother, because Isaac, the son of Sarah and Abraham, was the rightful heir to all of his father's property and was the "true son of promise." Abraham did not wish to send either Hagar or Ishmael away; but when he believed it to be God's will he did so, giving them some provisions to take with them and saying good-bye to them very sorrowfully.

Hagar was sad and lonely and very anxious

JOSHUA MADE COMMANDER BY MOSES.

SAUL ANOINTED BY SAMUEL.

when she went out into the wilderness with her little boy; but she journeyed on with him until he grew weak and faint, and the water which they had brought was all gone. Then when he cried for more and there was none to give him, she laid him upon the ground in the shade of a bush and went away by herself where she could sit down and hide her face and weep, for she was almost discouraged. She thought her dear little boy was going to die and that she would be left all alone in the world.

But finally God sent comfort to her, and she believed that her son would live and that he would be a great man in the future. So she rose again with hope in her heart and went to search for water, which she soon found, cool and refreshing. She filled the bottle joyfully and took it to the boy, who drank it eagerly and was refreshed and able to go on again.

God took care of both Hagar and Ishmael. The boy grew to be a man, and, living in the wilderness as he did, he became a great hunter and was skilled in all things pertaining to his wild life.

Hagar was born in Egypt, and she wished her son to marry a woman from that land; so she found a wife for him among the Egyptian women, and God's promise to her was fulfilled, for her son became the head, or chief man, of a nation.

If Ishmael had staid with his father and Isaac, his brother, the two boys would, perhaps, have

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL IN THE WILDERNESS.

quarreled over their inheritance, and Abraham would not have known how to divide it between them so that both would be satisfied; in any case they could not both have been the head of the tribe, or nation, after the death of their father.

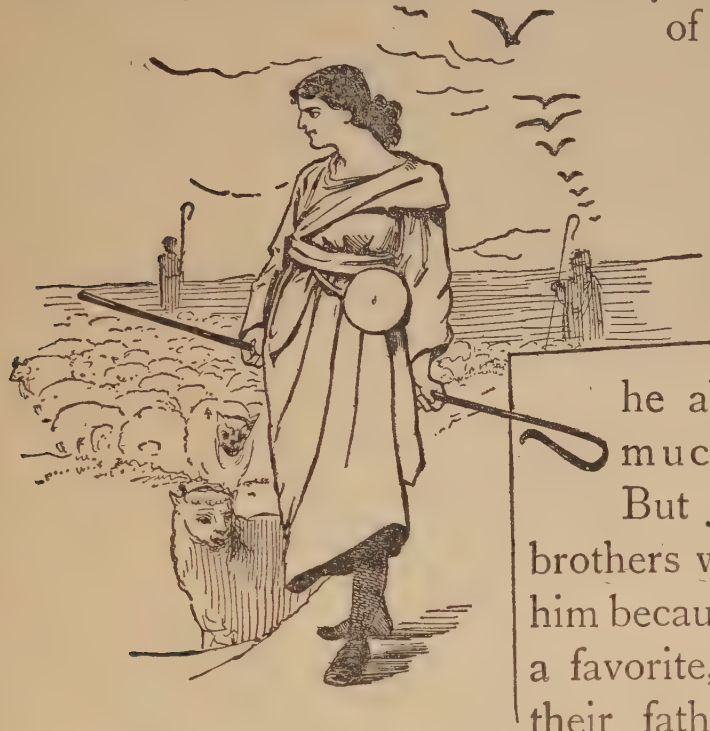
God saw all this, and because He loved Ishmael as well as Isaac, He sent him forth to be the founder of another tribe.

The story teaches this lesson, also, that although a child may be cast off without any rightful inheritance or even a family name, if he is brave and true and leads a noble life, the Lord can build up a name and an inheritance for him, and make him great and honored.

When Ishmael started out into the wilderness with his mother, it did not seem possible that he would ever become a great man, and Hagar must have had wonderful faith in God to trust Him through all her trial; but she did trust Him, and her faith was rewarded, as true faith always will be.

JOSEPH, THE FAVORITE SON.

The story of Joseph is one which children always love, and which is full of interest for older people as well; for it is as wonderful as a fairy tale, and yet deals with the history and biography of ancient times.



Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, and dearly loved by his father, whom he also loved very much in return. But Joseph's older brothers were jealous of him because he was such a favorite, and because their father had given him a beautiful coat of many colors.

Joseph helped care for the flocks, and sometimes he had strange dreams, which he told to his brothers. This was one of them: "Behold," he said, "we were binding sheaves in the field; and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf."

This made the brothers more jealous than ever,

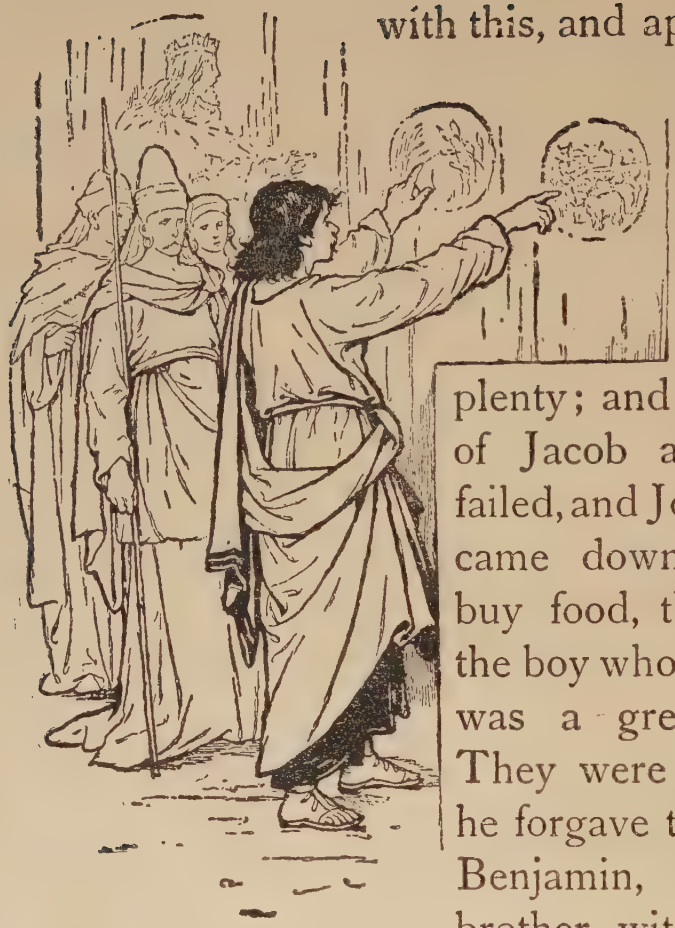
for they thought that his dream meant that he would rule over them, and they hated him for it.

They planned to put him out of the way, and soon had an opportunity to sell him to a party of strangers, who carried him

away to Egypt and sold him there.

Pharaoh, King of Egypt, dreamed some strange dreams, which Joseph interpreted to mean seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine, and he advised the king to provide for those years of famine. Pharaoh was pleased

JOSEPH MADE RULER OVER EGYPT



with this, and appointed Joseph himself ruler over the land.

In due time the famine came, but Egypt had plenty; and when the crops of Jacob and his people failed, and Joseph's brothers came down to Egypt to buy food, they found that the boy whom they had sold was a great ruler there. They were frightened, but he forgave them. He kept Benjamin, his youngest brother, with him, and sent for his father, inviting him to make his home in the land of Egypt, and at last there was a very joyful reunion.

Jacob and his family lived in their new home for many years, and Jacob blessed the children of Joseph and called them his own sons. When he died, they took him to the land of Canaan to be buried, as he had requested. But Joseph and his brethren continued to dwell in the land of Egypt.

THE FINDING OF MOSES

BALAAM AND THE ANGEL

MOSES

Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, had made a law that every boy baby of the Hebrew race should be killed, and there was great sorrow because of it. But when Moses was born, his mother managed to hide him for three months; then she made a cradle, or little ark, and putting him into it, carried him down to a river and hid the cradle among the reeds there.

Soon after this, Pharaoh's daughter came with her maidens to the river-side, and when she saw the beautiful child, she sent one of her maidens to bring it to her.

She took the little boy to the palace and named him Moses, and he became a great man among the Egyptians; he knew, however, that he belonged

THE FINDING OF MOSES.

to the Hebrew race, and when he saw how badly his own people were treated, he tried to help them; but at last he was obliged to leave Egypt, and became a shepherd, taking care of the flocks of a priest called Jethro. He also married Jethro's daughter.

After a time, God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush, and told him that he must go and rescue his people from the cruel Egyptians. Moses thought he could not do this; but God promised to help him, and to show him what he would be able to do with that help, God turned the rod which Moses carried into a serpent. Then God told

Moses to pick the serpent up by the tail, and as he did so, it became a rod again. He showed him another sign, also; but Moses was still afraid, because he could not talk well and thought that Pharaoh would not listen to him. So God told him to take his brother Aaron for a spokesman.

Moses and Aaron, therefore, went into Egypt, where they called together the chief men among their own people, the Hebrews, or Israelites, and told them what God had commanded. Moses also did the miracles which God had given him power to do, and the people believed that God had sent him.

After this Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and told him that it was the Lord's command that

he should let the Israelites go. Pharaoh knew nothing about God, and became very angry, saying that Moses and Aaron kept the people from their work by telling them such things; and he treated the poor Israelites worse than before.

But Moses had faith in God; so he was able to perform before the king the wonderful things that he had done before his own people; still, Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then Moses turned the waters of the rivers into blood; and after that he caused large numbers of frogs to run over the land and through the houses, doing great harm. He also brought locusts and other insects to be a pest to the people, and caused many of the useful animals which belonged to the Egyptians to grow sick and die, doing all these wonders with the rod

which God had given him. But Pharaoh would not listen to him.

Then God commanded Moses again, and he brought other plagues upon the Egyptians; but Pharaoh would not give up.

At last, however, God sent a still more terrible trouble; for the first-born of every Egyptian family, and even the first-born among their flocks, died;

although the Israelites, who were constantly praying to the Lord and making sacrifices, were spared, as they had been all the time.

Then Pharaoh was frightened into obeying God, and he let the Israelites go; so they started at once for the land of Canaan, and the Lord guided them by a cloud, which at night looked like a pillar of fire.

When the Israelites had reached the Red Sea, they found that Pharaoh was pursuing them with a large army. But God commanded Moses to stretch forth his rod over the sea; he did so, and the waters parted, making a high wall upon either side, so that the children of Israel passed through and reached the other side in safety. Pharaoh and his hosts followed and were all drowned.

When the children of Israel saw that they were safe, they sang a beautiful song of praise to God, and then they went on their way again.

After they had traveled for some time, they were in need of bread and meat, and they com-

plained about Moses because he had brought them to a land where they had not enough to eat. But God sent them plenty of quails and also a substance which they could use for bread. Later, when they wanted water, the Lord commanded Moses, and he struck a rock with his rod, and pure water poured out of it, so that the thirsty people and their animals had all that they wanted.

In this way God took care of them as they journeyed through the new and strange country toward the promised land, and Moses became the law-giver of the Israelites, receiving his commandments from God.

SAMSON

As a child Samson was set apart to the service of the Lord, who gave him great strength and courage, so that he did many wonderful things.

One day he met a lion, and when the beast roared at him, he caught and killed it as though it had been a very small animal.

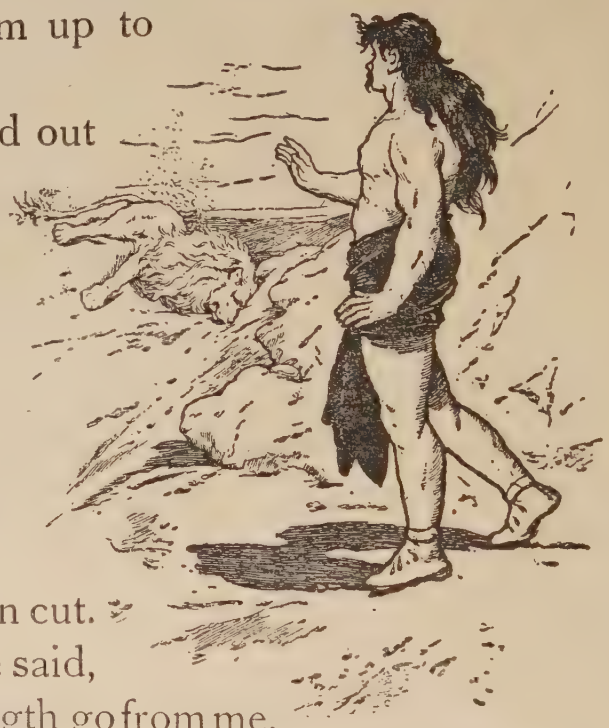
Later, the Philistines, who were enemies of the Israelites, did Samson a great wrong, and he wished to punish them; so he caught three hundred foxes and tied fire-brands to their tails; then he turned them loose in the corn-fields of the Philistines and burned up all their corn, also their vineyards and olives. At another time he killed a thousand of them with the jaw-bone of an ass.

Later still, Samson did a very wonderful thing. He had gone to a place called Gaza, and when the people knew he was there, they shut the gate

SAMSON AND DELILAH.

of the city so that he could not get away; for they meant to kill him. But Samson arose in the night and took down the heavy doors of the gate, carrying them off upon his back.

After Samson had lost his wife, he loved a woman named Delilah, and she pretended to love him; but she was a very wicked woman and wanted to give him up to the Philistines.



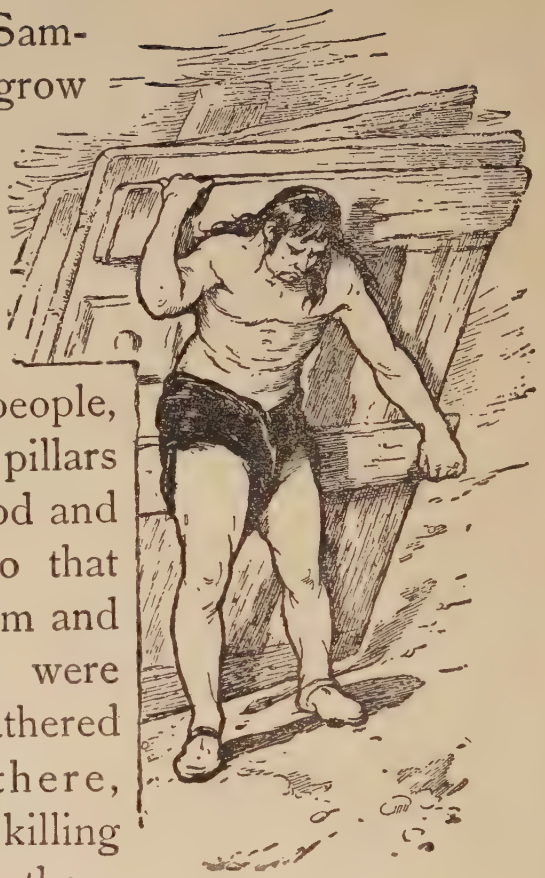
She tried to find out what gave Samson his great strength, but for a long time he would not tell her. At last, however, he yielded to her pleadings and told her that his hair had never been cut. "If I be shorn," he said, "then will my strength go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like other men."

Delilah told this to the Philistines, and they came and cut off Samson's hair while he slept; when he awoke, they took him prisoner and put out his eyes, besides treating him cruelly in many other ways.

SAMSON DESTROYS THE TEMPLE.

SAMSON KILLS A LION.

But after a time Samson's hair began to grow again, and his strength came back, and one day when they had taken him outside the building to make sport for a great number of people, he took hold of the pillars between which he stood and pulled them down, so that the house fell upon him and all the people who were gathered there, killing thousands of them.



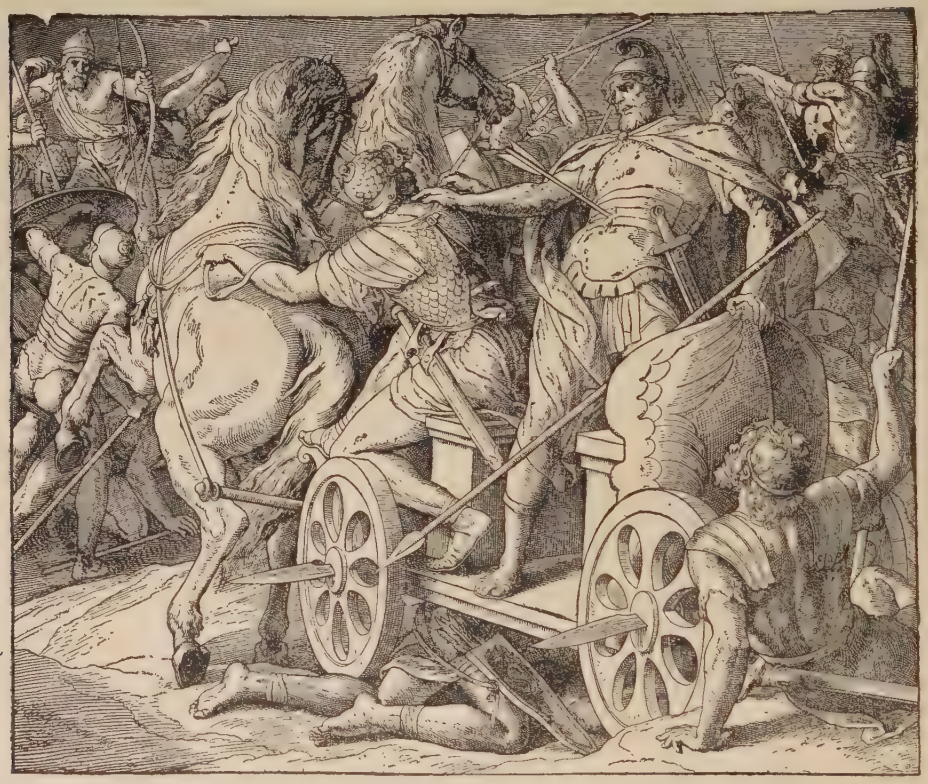
Samson was taken back to his own country to be buried in the burying-place of his father; for he had judged Israel twenty years, and it was only right that this honor should be shown him.

THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL.

Saul was the son of a man who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. He was tall and handsome and kingly-looking, and when Samuel had chosen him to be King of Israel and had brought him before the people, saying, "See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" They were pleased and shouted, "God save the king!"

Then Samuel wrote out the laws of the kingdom in a book which was to be very carefully guarded, and after that he sent the people away to their own homes. Saul also went home, a band of faithful men going with him. But there were some who were not pleased with the new king.

It was not long before the Ammonites, who were enemies of the Israelites, came up to fight against one of their cities, and Saul gathered a great army and defeated them. Then there was rejoicing in the kingdom, and Samuel told the people that although they had done wrong in demanding a king, yet if they served God faithfully, He would care



for them; but if they were wicked, they and their king should be destroyed.

The Philistines were very powerful enemies of the Israelites, who had been treated as their servants and were not allowed to have weapons such as the Philistines had. Saul, however, raised an army to go against these mighty enemies, and made his son Jonathan captain over a part of the army, while

GIDEON ASKING FOR A SIGN.

GIDEON DEFEATING THE MIDIANITES.

he himself led the remainder. Then Jonathan gained an important victory, and the Philistines, although they were so powerful, fled before the armies of Saul, because God was on his side.

But Saul disobeyed the Lord, who had helped him so wonderfully, and the words of Samuel the prophet came true, for at last the king was destroyed and his kingdom was given to another.

There is a great contrast between the characters of Samuel and Saul. Samuel was obedient to God in all things; Saul wanted his own way, even after God had shown him such great favor as to make him king of Israel.

His reign might have been a wonderful one had he done right. He was handsome, brave, strong, and generous, and well liked by the most of his people. It is true that the children of Israel had displeased God in demanding a king against the judgment of Samuel, the prophet of the Lord; but this would have been forgiven, and Saul's reign would have been blessed if only he had proved himself worthy. Instead of that he grew to be very unworthy, and the punishment of his sin came surely, as it always does, sooner or later, to all who disobey God.

RUTH AND NAOMI.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is one of the sweetest and most touching of all the Bible stories. It shows the beauty of unselfish devotion and constant love, and the happiness which they brought, and teaches a lesson which is very helpful to us all.

A long time ago, in the days of the judges of Israel, there was a famine in the land of Canaan, and a man named Elimelech, whose home was in Bethlehem, went with his wife Naomi and his two sons to live in Moab.

After they had been there a while Naomi's husband died, leaving her with the two sons. Then, by and by, the sons married, and their wives were very good to Naomi, and loved her. But it was only ten years before both of the sons died, and Naomi thought it was best for her to go back to her old home in Canaan; for she had been told that there was plenty in the land once more, and she wanted to see her own people

and the relatives of her husband who was dead. So Naomi told her daughters-in-law to return to their own homes, because she could not expect them to be willing to leave everything for her sake.

"Go, each of you, to your mother's house," she said; "the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me." But they both wept and clung to her, saying, "Surely we will return with thee into thy land."

Naomi, however, thought they would be unhappy if they left their own country, and she urged them to stay there and let her go alone; so one of them kissed her over and over again and promised to do as she bade; but the other, who was named Ruth, would not leave her.

"Entreat me not to leave thee," she pleaded, "or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more, also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Then Naomi stopped urging her to return, and they went together to Bethlehem, where the friends of Naomi were very glad to welcome her and greeted her in a very friendly manner, saying again and again, "Is this Naomi?"

But she answered: "Call me not Naomi, but call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." She said this because Naomi

RUTH AND NAOMI

means "pleasant" and Mara means "bitter," and the sorrowing widow felt that her life was a bitter rather than a pleasant one, since she had been bereaved of her husband and sons.

There lived in Bethlehem a man named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, and who was also very wealthy. He had a large farm, and many people, both men and women, worked in his fields, and as it was about the beginning of the barley harvest when the two women came to Bethlehem, these fields presented a busy appearance.

Ruth wished to do something to help support herself and her mother-in-law, so she begged Naomi to let her go into the fields and glean after the reapers—that is, to gather up the barley that was left after they had made up the sheaves—and Naomi told her that she might go.

Ruth happened to choose the field of Boaz to

DAVID SINGING PSALMS OF PRAISE

work in, and when the wealthy man came into the field and saw her, he said, "The Lord bless thee!" but he did not know who she was.

As he went away he inquired of the head reaper about the young woman, and afterward he said to Ruth: "Go not to glean in another field, but keep here close to my maidens." He also spoke to his young men about her, telling them to be kind and courteous to her, and he bade her go and drink of the water which they drew whenever she was thirsty.

When Ruth wondered at his kindness and asked him why he was so good to a stranger, he told her that he had heard of her love for Naomi and her unselfish devotion, and he said: "The Lord reward thee, and a full recompense be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." He invited her also to sit with his reapers at meal-time, and he waited upon her that she might have enough to eat and drink.

When she had gone he commanded his young men to let her glean among the sheaves and to drop some handfuls purposely for her, and not to find fault with her or reprove her.

So Ruth worked in the field all day, and then beat out the barley which she had gleaned and took it to the city to show Naomi, who was very glad, indeed, and very thankful.

Naomi asked Ruth where she had gleaned, and when she had heard the whole story, she told her

that Boaz was a near relative and that it was well for her to stay in his fields, as he had given her permission to do, until the end of the harvest, So Ruth kept close to the maidens who gleaned in the fields of Boaz until the end of both the barley and the wheat harvests.

Then one night when Boaz was to have a winnowing of barley, Naomi told Ruth to make herself ready, putting on her best clothing, and to go to the winnowing and the feast and to ask Boaz what she should do.

The winnowing is the fanning out of the straws from the kernels after the husks have been beaten off. A great many people helped about the work, and a feast was prepared for them.

Ruth did as Naomi had told her to do. When she had informed Boaz that she was a near relative he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter." Then he told her not to be afraid, but to bring the long veil which she wore, and when she had brought it he poured a large quantity of barley into it. She carried this to the city and gave it to her mother-in-law, telling her what Boaz had said, and Naomi was comforted; for she knew that Boaz would advise them wisely.

After this Boaz went to the city and consulted with the chief men and those that were interested in the welfare of Naomi and Ruth, and when he found that it would be wronging no one, he told the people that he was going to take Ruth for his

wife, and the people said, "We are witnesses" So Boaz married Ruth; but in her new position as the wife of a very wealthy and influential man, this noble woman did not forget her love for Naomi, whom she still tenderly cared for. When a little son came to bless the union, Naomi rejoiced, for she felt almost as though it was her own little son, and she named him Obed and delighted in taking care of him.

When Obed became a man he married and had a son named Jesse, who in turn became the father of David, the great king of Israel. Jesus Himself was of the House of David, and so God's promise to His chosen people was fulfilled.

DANIEL.

After the ten tribes of Israel had rebelled and formed a kingdom of their own, the other two tribes had a separate history, which it is very interesting to study.

The people of the Kingdom of Judah had been ruled over by many kings, some of them good, and

others very bad; but God had been with them all the time, and had saved them from their enemies, until at last they refused to listen to the prophets and obey the Lord; then He permitted Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, to conquer them.

Among the princes taken to Babylon, were four who were especially strong in character and who worshipped God with all their hearts and obeyed all His commandments. At last Daniel, one of these four princes, told the king the meaning of a dream which the wise men of the kingdom had not been able to interpret, and this pleased Nebuchadnezzar so much that he made the young prince a great ruler; while he also gave high positions to the other three.

Nebuchadnezzar had caused an image of gold to be made and had commanded his people to fall down and worship it. Daniel was probably in some other part of the kingdom at this time, but his three companions refused to obey the command and were bound and cast into a furnace of fire. The king was astonished, however, to see the young men, free from their bonds, walking about in the furnace with a fourth man, who "looked like the Son of God."

The three princes came out of the furnace unharmed, and the king made a decree, or law, that no one should speak against their God; and he gave them higher positions than they had held before.

Daniel kept his power for many years; but he had cruel enemies, and at last, in the reign of

DANIEL READS THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

Darius, these enemies got the king to make a law that any one who offered a petition to any god or man except the king for thirty days, should be cast into the den of lions.

When Daniel went on with his worship of God, these wicked men reported it to the king, who, although he was much troubled, could not refuse to have the law executed.

So Daniel was thrown into the den; but he was not harmed, for God would not permit the savage beasts to injure him, and when he was taken out, the men who had caused him to be so cruelly treated were themselves thrown to the lions. After this King Darius sent out a decree that all the people of his kingdom should worship the God of Daniel.

THE HANDWRITING UPON THE WALL.

SAMUEL.

When Samuel was born, Hannah, his mother, sang a beautiful hymn of praise to God, and as soon as her son was old enough, she took him to live at the tabernacle, or house where the priests lived and where services were held. There Samuel studied with Eli, the high priest, and was taught to serve the Lord; for Hannah had promised that if God would send her a son, he should be given to the service of the Lord all his days.

Samuel prayed to God and lived a very beautiful life, and after the death of Eli, he became the judge over Israel. He was only twenty years old at this time, but the Lord was with him and told him what to do, and he became not only a judge, but a prophet also.

The people of Israel had displeased God by worshiping idols. So Samuel called them together and told them that if they would return to God He would save them from the Philistines, who were constantly troubling them.

They listened to the words of their prophet, and

JONAH CALLING TO REPENTANCE.

fasted and prayed; then the Lord forgave them and caused them to gain the victory over their enemies.

When Samuel had grown old, he made his two sons judges over Israel, to help him in his work. But the prophet's sons were not good men, and they cared more about making money than they did about judging Israel as they ought; so the people came to Samuel, and asked him to give them a king to rule over them.

Samuel did not wish to do this; he thought it would not be as well for the people. But they still cried out that they wanted a king, and finally he anointed Saul to be king over them. Saul displeased God, however, and Samuel told him that the Lord would take his kingdom away. He also anointed David to be king after Saul's death.

When Samuel died, the people mourned sincerely for him, because he was a good man and a great prophet and judge.

DAVID.

David, the son of Jesse, was a beautiful boy, who could charm by his wonderful music. But he was to be more than a "sweet singer," for Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, declared that he should be King of Israel, and poured the sacred oil upon his head.

Saul, who was then the King of Israel, had spells of insanity, and David was sent for to try and calm him by his music. In this he was so successful that after a time the king seemed to be entirely cured; so David returned to his home, and staid there quietly until his father sent him to the camp of the Israelites, with food for his brothers.

He found Saul's army in great commotion, because Goliath, a mighty warrior of the Philistines, had come out before both armies and had offered to fight any man who should be sent against him.

Goliath had a cap of brass on his head, and his body was well protected with a covering of iron and brass, while he carried a monstrous spear and

sword, and a heavy shield. As he came before the two camps, he cried out: "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together!"

When David came up and heard the story, he said: "Who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And David offered to go forth against Goliath.

So he went out in his shepherd's dress, with only his staff and sling; and Goliath, who was very angry at this, cried out: "Am I a dog, that thou comest against me with a staff?" Then he began to make fun of David. But David answered: "Thou comest against me with a sword and a shield; but I come against thee trusting in the

SAUL ANGRY WITH DAVID.

Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Then, as Goliath came nearer, David took a stone from the bag at his side, and putting it into his sling, he took good aim, and it struck Goliath in the middle of the forehead and stunned him. As the giant fell, David ran up to him, and taking the mighty sword, cut off his head with it.

This act of David's brought a great victory to Saul's army, and the king was delighted with his courage; while Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, loved the boy from that time, and they became like brothers. David also married the daughter of Saul, and was placed over his men of war.

But when all the people praised David, and

Saul knew how much they loved him, he grew jealous, and David was obliged to fly for his life and hide himself from the king. During these wanderings, he wrote some of his most beautiful psalms.

Saul, however, was finally killed, and at last David became king. He ruled Israel for nearly forty years, making it a great and powerful nation; and when he died he was buried at Jerusalem, which was called "The City of David," because he had caused it to be taken from the enemy.

THE DEATH OF ABSALOM.

Absalom was the son of David, King of Israel, and his father loved him very dearly. But Absalom killed one of his brothers who had committed a great crime, and then he hurried away from his home at Jerusalem and did not return for three years, because he feared for his own life.

After the three years, however, David sent word to him that he might come back and live in his own house, but that he must not visit the king; for he felt that it was his duty to punish Absalom, even though he still loved him.

So Absalom returned, and as soon as he could he sent a messenger to his father, begging that he might be allowed to see him, and saying that if the king found him evil, then he was ready to forfeit his own life.

When David heard this he sent for his son, and Absalom came and bowed to the ground before him; and David kissed him and forgave him.

Absalom was very beautiful indeed, with a strong and noble figure and a magnificent head of hair, which he wore long, as was the custom in those days, and everybody admired him; but he was not a good man, for he wished to take his father's kingdom away from him, that he himself might be king.

He tried to win the hearts of the people away from David and to make them believe that they were not treated justly; he told the men that if

SOLOMON WORSHIPPING STRANGE GODS

only he were judge every one should be treated fairly, and when they bowed down before him, he took each one by the hand and kissed him. Then, after he had won many hearts, he planned a rebellion, sending out spies and raising troops to fight against David.

When the king heard all this and knew that

Absalom was coming against him with many men, he left Jerusalem and went into the wilderness, or forest. He made his way up to Mount Olivet, weeping as he went, with his head covered and his feet bare, and all that went with him wept also and had their heads covered to show their sorrow, for that was the custom in the time of David.

When David had reached the top of Mount Olivet, he worshiped God and prayed to Him, and he also sent back a messenger to find out what was being done at Jerusalem. They learned that

THE DEATH OF ABSALOM

Absalom was ready to fight against the king; so David raised an army to go forth to meet the army of Absalom, but he commanded his men to deal gently with the undutiful son for the sake of the father who loved him.

The two armies met in a great battle, and twenty thousand of the soldiers of Absalom were killed. Absalom's long hair caught in the branches of a tree as he was riding under it, and he could not get away; so when David's men came up they killed him, in spite of the king's words, they were so angry with him, and putting his body into a pit, they covered it with stones. Then they sent a messenger to David, telling him that his son was dead.

When David heard the news he wept and mourned, crying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" And all the people mourned with him, in spite of the great victory that had been won.

But after a time they grew tired of the mourning and wished to see their king who had been spared to them, and they thought he should care something for them as well as for the son who had been so cruel; so David went out and sat in the gate, and the people came there to see him and rejoiced that he was safe, and for their sakes he tried to control his sorrow.

THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

The reign of King Solomon is one of the most remarkable in all the history of Israel, for Solomon was a very wonderful man, and his fame spread out over all the land, so that people came from great distances to see him. The visit of the Queen of Sheba is particularly mentioned in the Bible.

Solomon was the son of King David, and when his father died, he became King of Israel, although he was only a boy at that time.

Now, to be a king requires great wisdom and judgment; but Solomon trusted in God, so God helped him and gave him wisdom and knowledge when he asked for them. God also gave him riches and honor and long life, so that there was never another king like King Solomon.

This great man ruled not only over Israel, but over other nations as well; for David, his father, had conquered many people. These people brought

presents of great value to the king, and Solomon's wealth constantly increased, while his wisdom was talked about everywhere.

Very early in his reign, Solomon had won the confidence of his people by the wise manner in which he had settled a dispute between two women who both claimed the same child.

It was impossible to tell which was the mother,

so King Solomon commanded that a sword be brought and that the living child be cut in two, in order that half could be given to each of the women who claimed him.

But the mother of the child cried out to the king not to have her baby killed, saying that the other woman might keep him if only his life could

be spared; while the woman whose child was really dead was willing that the boy should be killed. So King Solomon knew at once that the infant belonged to the woman who begged to have his life spared, and he gave the child back to her.

When the people heard this, they believed that God had put wisdom into the heart of the king, and they obeyed him still more willingly; while

Solomon went on judging them wisely, and advancing in knowledge and power. But later, he married a great many heathen wives, who brought idolatry with them, and this was not pleasing to God.

Solomon caused a magnificent temple to be built at Jerusalem, and he had a number of beauti-

ful palaces for himself and his wives. His extravagance, however, was not pleasing to the people; so, in spite of his wisdom, the king was not loved as well as when he first came into power.

King Solomon wrote many proverbs and psalms, but a great many of his writings have been lost. He was King of Israel for forty years and when he died, was buried at Jerusalem.

ESTHER.

The story of Esther is one of the most beautiful in the Bible. It tells of a lovely orphan Jewess, who had been adopted by her uncle, Mordecai, and who became a queen.

One of the king's best friends was a man named Haman, whom every one flattered. Mordecai, who had been the means of saving the king's life, would not flatter Haman, because he knew that the man was bad at heart; he had also

discovered a plot which the wicked Haman had made to kill the king; so Haman feared and hated him, and planned to destroy all the Jews, that he might get rid of this man.

When the Jews learned that they were to be destroyed, there was great mourning. Mordecai clothed himself in sackcloth and prayed to God, and he also sent word to Esther, asking her to go to the king and plead for her people, although it was a law in the land that if any one should go to the king without being summoned, that person should be put to death, unless the king held out to him the golden scepter.

Esther, however, determined to make this attempt to save her people, even if she lost her own life; so she fasted and prayed, and then went before the king to make her petition.

King Ahasuerus was touched by her beauty as she stood before him, and he at once held out the golden scepter to her, saying, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom."

So Esther saved her people, and the wicked Haman was hanged upon the very gallows which he had caused to be made for Mordecai.

MORDECAI HONORED BY KING AHASUERUS

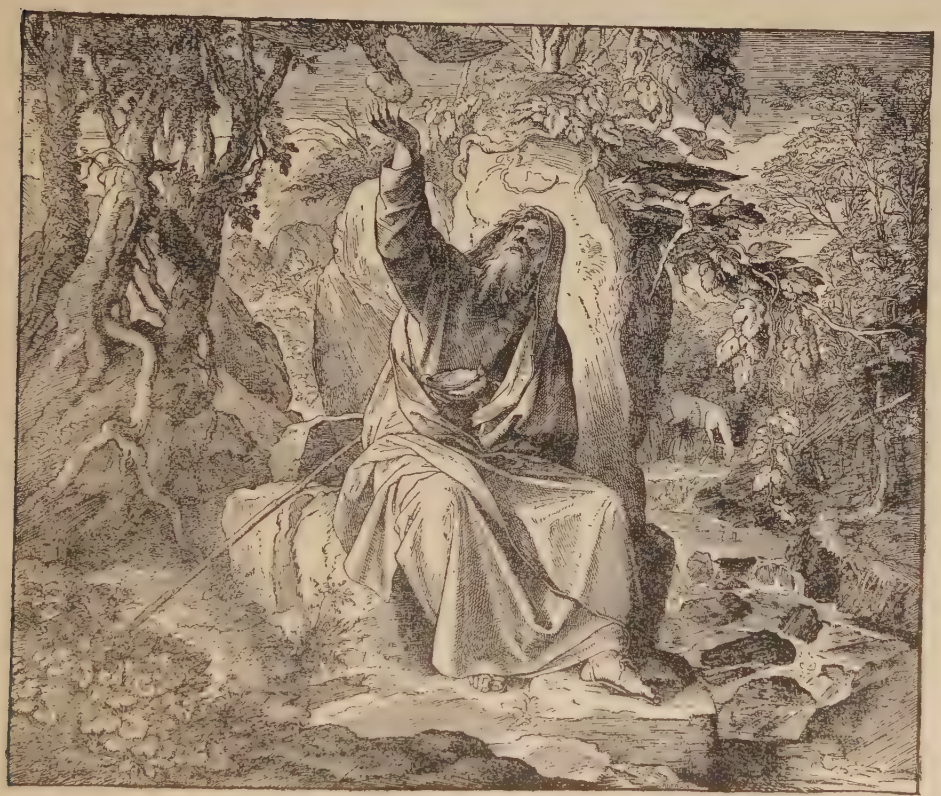
ELIJAH.

Elijah (*My God is Jehovah*). This most renowned prophet of Israel bursts forth in sacred story as the stern denouncer of judgment on apostate Israel, and after his marvelous course of miracles and bold indication of God's authority, is translated to heaven without tasting death.

Elijah proclaimed that there should be neither "dew nor rain these years but according to his word" (the time being left indefinite). But he himself was to be cared for. By the brook Cherith he might make his abode and there sufficient food should be brought him. "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and in the evening." When the brook Cherith dried up, Elijah was commanded to repair to Zarepath, where, in a widow's house, occurred the wonder—which has ever since brought rich comfort to many an humble servant of God—of the barrel of meal never wasting, the cruse of oil not failing. Here, too, was wrought the miracle of the raising of the widow's son to life.

Ahab the king had long sought Elijah to destroy him, as the author of the country's calamity. He showed himself, and summoned Ahab to his presence, and commanded that the prophets of idolatry

should be collected and the grand contest between their divinities and the Lord Jehovah be decided in the sight of the gathered people of Israel. Never was there a more magnificent scene, never a more magnificent result. Even the wavering Israelites were convinced by the decision and uttered the shout, "The Lord, he is the God." Ahab's au-



thority seemed for a time set aside; and Elijah directed the execution, according to the law, of the idolatrous; and no man dared to interfere.

The time was come when Elijah's ministry on earth should end. He asked his successor, Elisha, what he should do for him. "Let a double por-

tion of thy spirit be upon me," was the reply. If he saw his master when he was taken away, it should be granted. While they were talking, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, parting the two and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha gathered up the mantle which fell from Elijah as he rose, the symbol of his own succession, and felt that his petition was granted. For a far longer time did he exercise the sacred office; and his influence became more extensive and was exercised more in deeds of mercy than in those of judgment.

THE PROPHET ELIJAH TRANSLATED INTO HEAVEN

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

John the Baptist was the son of a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, who was a cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

John was born when his parents were very old. It had been prophesied of him that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost and should do a great work in the world, and these prophecies were all fulfilled, as were the prophecies about Jesus Himself.

After John was born, his father, Zacharias, the priest, foretold the coming of Christ. John lived in the wilderness, becoming strong and preparing himself for his duties, until, when he grew to be a man, he went forth as John the Baptist, and the people flocked to hear him preach.

He was of very nearly the same age as Jesus, and he told the people of the Savior's coming, urging them to repent of their sins, and many of them were baptized by him in the River Jordan.

But he thought of his own work as small compared with that which Jesus was to do, and said:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

After a time Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized as the others were; but John felt that this was not fitting, and he said: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

Jesus said to him: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." And then John baptized Him.

This shows us that Jesus believed in doing all things in accordance with the laws and rules which

had already been given to the people, if those laws were right and just.

When Jesus came out of the water after His baptism, He prayed to God, and the place was full of light; while the Spirit of the Heavenly Father thrilled all hearts, so that they knew that Jesus was the Son of God.

At this time our Lord was about thirty years of age. He had left His home and the mother whom He tenderly loved, to go forth and teach the people wherever He felt that He was most needed. The next few years of His life were crowded full of work and suffering such as no human being can fully understand, because it was the suffering of a perfect nature, and His love for the world was a

greater love than any earthly heart is capable of feeling.

It was John the Baptist's nearness to God which made him able to comprehend that Jesus was more than human. John himself had lived so close to the Heavenly Father that he had a clearer vision than would have been his had he simply gone to work as other men did, or studied the books that they studied, and it was his great mission to prepare the way for the Savior—to make the people ready as far as possible. This was a grand and beautiful work.

John the Baptist lived a noble life in every way; he was not afraid to condemn sin, whether the sinner was humble or powerful. He had even told Herod the king and Herodias his wife that they had done wrong. For this Herod had him put in prison; but Herodias was not satisfied with his imprisonment, she wanted him to be put to death. Herod, however, was

THE ANNUNCIATION TO MARY.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

afraid to have him killed, because he feared the people.

When Herod's birthday came he made a great feast, and the daughter of Herodias, who was named Salome, came in and danced before the king and his company, pleasing Herod so much that he told her he would grant her whatever request she made, even if she asked for the half of his kingdom.

Then Salome, who had been told by her mother what to claim in fulfillment of the promise, asked for the head of John the Baptist to be brought to her upon a charger, or large platter.

So, because the king had sworn to give her anything for which she asked, he caused John the Baptist to be beheaded and his head to be brought to Salome upon a charger. The young girl took this dreadful present to her mother, and the wicked queen rejoiced.

Thus ended the life of the great preacher. His disciples came and took his body from the prison and buried it; but John's work was already done and his noble destiny was fulfilled.

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